

OVER 100 BUTTERFLY SPECIES SIGHTED AT PACHAMALAI

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TNBS conducted the survey in the reserve forest and open areas

Endowed with valleys, ridges, waterfalls and thick forest areas, the picturesque and scenic Pachamalai hills in Tiruchi district has multiple species of butterflies - both in the reserve forest and open areas.

During a two-day exploratory preliminary survey carried out by the Tamil Nadu Butterfly Society (TNBS) with cooperation from the State Forest Department, a total number of 105 species of butterflies were sighted at the Pachamalai hills.

The team from the TNBS with assistance from field level forest officials conducted the survey in forest areas, open spaces and fringes of the forests on September 10 and 11.

Certain species which were usually thought to be predominantly or exclusively present in Western Ghats were also present in Pachamalai that falls under the Eastern Ghats.

The team had embarked on the exploratory exercise at Pachamalai hills under the guidance of the District Forest Officer, Tiruchi, N. Satish - to collect and record butterfly species.

According to the survey some of the butterfly species sighted in Pachmalai includes White Banded Awl, Banded Blue Pierrot, Glad-eye Bushbrown, Glassy Tiger, Dark Wanderer, Malabar Spotted Flat, Golden Angle, Double-banded Judy, Straight Swift, Indian Palm Bob, Blue Pansy, Peacock Pansy, Swallowtails , Pioneer, Tawny Coster, Monkey Puzzle, Peacock Royal, Slate Flash, Plains Cupid and Common Hedge Blue.

Rare species

Some rare species like Dark Pierrot, Peacock Royal, Redspot and Plumbeous Silverline were also sighted in the scenic hills.

While the reserve forest areas had rare species, the open areas were dominated by common species.

Most dominating species were Common Mormon, Common Banded Peacock, Blue Mormon, Common Grass Yellow, Common Emigrant and Indian Skipper.

The Malayan species seen in Pachamalai was significantly larger in size than those spotted in the Western Ghats, according to the team's observation post survey. Species belonging to the 'Nymphalidae' family, the 'Lycaenidae' and 'Hesperidae' family were also sighted.

The Malabar Spotted Flats dominated the lower elevation, while Indian Skipper were more on the plains and the Common Small Flat and the Awls dominated the reserve forests, according to the team's observation.

The TNBS has been working to systematically collect and record number of butterfly species in Tamil Nadu in various habitats and in various times of the year.

A detailed survey on butterfly species would be conducted soon in Pachamalai and in other areas in the district by the TNBS team, said District Forest Officer Sathish.

Within two days a little over 100 species of butterflies had been sighted which is a clear indication that flora and fauna in Pachamalai is very good, says Mohan Prasath, one of the TNBS team member.

The area covered was limited during two days. There is also possibility of more butterfly species in the entire Pachamalai hills, Mr. Mohan Prasath said.

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(<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/Over-100-butterfly-species-sighted-at-Pachamalai/article14989611.ece>)